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AUTHOR Schaefer, William D.
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ABSTRACT

This discussion of the quality of higher education examines how and why academic institutions are failing to provide students with a meaningful undergraduate education, and what can and should be done about it. It argues that colleges and universities, in an attempt to simultaneously provide an academic education and train students for careers, have undermined the purpose and value of traditional liberal arts education. Chapters are devoted to the knowledge explosion as an emerging crisis in the academic disciplines, reading and writing as essential to a coherent curriculum, the need for more widespread foreign language competence among college graduates, the teacher's role in awakening the student's need to know, the publish-or-perish dilemma, and the problem of limited interest in the humanities. In addition, the book calls for major changes in higher education that would replace a chaotic patchwork curriculum with a coherent sequence of studies designed to develop students' understanding of the world and to help them think, communicate, and make decisions in life and work. Recommended changes in policies and practices governing teaching, research, and reward systems are detailed. (MSE)

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